

COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT      The Livestock Industry of Soviet Armenia

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There were considerable numbers of sheep and cattle. The goat, hog, and horse populations were much smaller. There was relatively little poultry and no special poultry farms anywhere in Armenia. 25X1

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There were no significant regional differences within Armenia. Cattle were divided into classes A, B, and C for slaughtering purposes. Class A cattle were slaughtered at 800-1000 pounds and yielded about 60% dressed meat. Class B cattle were slaughtered at 450-800 pounds and yielded about 40% dressed meat. Class C cattle, thin and usually sick cattle which had to be slaughtered, were taken at 300-450 pounds and yielded 35-37% dressed meat. (Armenian cattle are small but the stock was beginning to improve in 1940 as the result of breeding with Swiss "gray" cattle. The USSR was buying the Swiss bulls at a cost of US\$4 to 5 thousand apiece. Beginning in 1937 nearly all Armenian cattle were bred only by artificial insemination, with the imported Swiss bulls usually providing the semen. Ejaculation was induced through the use of an artificial vagina, and one ejaculation sufficed for the impregnation of 20 to 22 cattle. The semen was stored in paraffin-sealed containers and shipped to insemination centers. The system

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was efficient and highly developed and had the additional advantage of reducing the incidence of disease through contact. By 1940 artificial insemination of cows was in widespread use throughout the USSR and especially in Armenia and Georgia where the local cattle were generally small and unproductive.) Other livestock were not divided into classes for slaughtering. Hogs were slaughtered at an average of about 400 pounds, yielding nearly 85% dressed meat. Sheep and goats averaged about 100 pounds at slaughter and yielded 40% dressed meat. The slaughtering of goats was irregular and never very considerable. [redacted] as a rough average

five goats were slaughtered to every 100 sheep. Poultry was not a regular industry [redacted]

Poultry was raised, butchered, and marketed on an individual and small-scale basis. [redacted]

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the following are the daily averages for individual slaughterhouses [redacted]

The Federal Meat Trust at Leninakan

Cattle	Sheep	Hogs
200-250	500-600	500-600

Most of this meat went to the army and to the large cities of the USSR. Almost none of it went into Armenian food markets.

The Yerevan Slaughterhouse

50-60	200	50-60
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The Karaklis Slaughterhouse

10-15	100	5-10
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The Ashtarak (12 miles NW of Yerevan) Slaughterhouse

12	50	2-3
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Many of the small towns of Soviet Armenia had small slaughterhouses where livestock was slaughtered for local consumption. A slaughterhouse in a town of 10,000 population would average in one day, five cattle, 25-30 sheep, and one or two hogs. All the livestock were carefully inspected before slaughtering.

About 10% was canned. The greater part went to the army. Most of the canned meat was beef, with pork next in quantity. Lamb and mutton were never canned.

What was the annual per capita meat consumption in Soviet Armenia?

In 1940 Soviet Armenia had a population of three and one half million. I do not remember having ever heard or seen any figures on total meat consumption but I would estimate that it averaged about two pounds per month per person. The farmers ate no meat during the week and very little at any time. As a student at the Veterinary College, I had a little more than two pounds of meat per month. The workers in the cities ate fairly large amounts of meat and brought up the average to the figure [redacted]

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The only movement of livestock and livestock products in and out of Soviet Armenia consisted of the cattle imported from Turkey and slaughtered, for the most part, by the Federal Meat Trust at Leninakan. As already indicated, most of this meat was shipped elsewhere and had nothing to do with the economy of Soviet Armenia. In 1940 the USSR was importing Turkish cattle at the rate of 50 to 60 thousand a year. These cattle were slaughtered in Soviet Armenia for geographical reasons alone.

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About 50% of the cattle were the local variety mixed with Swiss "gray". The other 50% were called "German Red Cattle", a small breed introduced originally by German settlers in Armenia. The sheep population consisted of roughly 50% of the local (Caucasian type) long-haired breed with a large fat tail. The other 50% of the sheep population were imported merinos and "precos" (phonetic for Armenian name). There were special collective farms for raising these sheep for the wool industry. After 1935 all the hogs in Soviet Armenia were of outside origin. The domestic black hogs were all slaughtered between 1930 and 1935 and replaced by imported pure white Ukrainian hogs (excellent for bacon) and the long-eared Yorkshires (brought in from the ) which yield a great deal of fat.

there were approximately equal numbers of these two breeds of hogs in Soviet Armenia in 1940.

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(a) Cattle (no important distinction was made between beef and dairy cattle; most were used for both purposes) grazed on the mountains during June, July, August, and September. There is excellent grass on the Armenian mountains. The cattle were brought back at the end of September and were sheltered in unheated barns. The feed during their months indoors consisted of hay and cottonseed cakes. The cakes were stored in special rooms adjoining the barns. The wheat was stacked outside the barns and remained fresh under its covering of snow and ice in the winter. The stacks were cut into at the top as the hay was needed and there was very little waste. The top half inch, against the snow and ice, rotted but the rest stayed good.

(b) Goats and sheep were kept together and throughout all of Soviet Armenia were always on the move. They grazed on the mountains when the valleys were hot and moved gradually down the mountains as the tops were snowed under. No man-made shelter was provided for sheep and goats. They fed on grass, leaves, and hazelnuts. After harvests, they were grazed in the barley and cotton fields where, during a period of three or four days, they gleaned the remnants of the harvest and deposited manure which was then turned into the soil for fertilizer.

(c) The hogs in Soviet Armenia were sheltered in very clean special barns having cement or hard clay floors covered with sawdust or straw. Their fodder consisted largely of sesame seed cakes and corn softened with water for at least 12 hours before feeding. It was against the law to feed garbage of any kind to hogs. In some of the wine counties of Soviet Armenia hogs were occasionally given the pulp of pressed grapes, a fodder that made them slightly drunk and helped to increase their weight. Another type of fodder for hogs was a certain kind of wild grass which contains small black seeds resembling very small coffee beans. These seeds, which are rich in oil, were fed loose to hogs. Hog feed was kept in special storage rooms, as in the case of cattle feed.

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emphasize the exceptional care which was, and no doubt still is, given to hogs in the USSR. Not only were their shelters kept very clean and their feed and fodder carefully prescribed, but the hogs themselves were bathed at least twice a month.

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the total milk production was not great. Most cows yielded no more than one gallon a day although this yield was increasing in 1940 as a result of breeding with the Swiss cattle mentioned previously.

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the average production per year was about six pounds for most sheep. Farmers were not permitted to handle wool any more than absolutely necessary and all of it was considered the property of the Government of the USSR. Wool was very dear, being more expensive at that time than nylon now is in the US.

the situation in Armenia was generally similar to that prevailing in the rest of the USSR. The point to be made, is that Soviet Armenia is not a major meat producing area compared to other parts of the USSR - the Ukraine, for example. Relatively speaking Soviet Armenia is more of a dairy than a meat product region. Further, the livestock industry as a whole is not a naturally important segment of the Armenian economy. If Armenia were an independent nation, its livestock industry would deteriorate in favor of basically agricultural pursuits, especially cotton and wine-making.

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